

Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SCA-01 CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00

NSAE-00 EUR-12 /027 W

----- 038678

R 222113Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

SECSTATE WASHDC 6755

UNCLAS NASSAU 845

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS BF

SUBJ: NIV - TRANSIT VISA TRWOV PROBLEMS AT NASSAU

REF: LUXEMBOURG 244

NASSAU A-54 3/11/74 TO DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT'S OM 3/27/74 TO NASSAU

SUMMARY - POST APPRECIATES CONCERN EXPRESSED IN LUXEMBOURG'S REFERENCED TELEGRAM REGARDING TRANSIT VISA AND TRWOV PROBLEMS. THIS RESPONSE (1) REAFFIRMS EFFECTIVE UNAVAILABILITY OF TRWOV FOR ALIENS TRANSITING MIAMI FROM THE BAHAMAS, AND (2) REQUESTS THE ASSISTANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT AND EUR AND ARA POSTS IN ALLEVIATING THE PROBLEM.

1. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED TO THE DEPARTMENT IN THE POST'S A-54 OF MARCH 11, 1974, TRWOV IS IN EFFECT NOT REPEAT NOT AVAILABLE TO ALIENS WHO PLAN TO TRANSIT MIAMI ON FLIGHTS EMBARKING AT NASSAU (OR FREEPORT). ONLY TWO AIRLINES (EASTERN AND BAHAMASAIR) HAVE SCHEDULED FLIGHTS BETWEEN THE BAHAMAS AND MIAMI. ALTHOUGH BOTH AIRLINES ARE SIGNATORY TO THE TRWOV AGREEMENT, BOTH HAVE DECIDED AGAINST ACCEPTING TRWOV PASSENGERS BECAUSE THEY DO NOT CONSIDER THE SMALL AMOUNT OF REVENUE OBTAINED IN CARRYING PASSENGERS FROM THE BAHAMAS TO MIAMI WORTH THE RISKS OR LOGISTICAL HEADACHES INVOLVED IN FLYING PASSENGERS TRWOV. CONSEQUENTLY THIS POST AGAIN EXPECTS ANOTHER SEASON OF NUMEROUS APPLICATIONS FOR TRANSIT VISAS BY ALIENS EN ROUTE TO LATIN AMERICA.

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2. THE MIX OF SUCH APPLICANTS CONSISTS PRIMARILY OF LATIN AMERICANS RETURNING HOME AFTER A VISIT TO EUROPE AND EUROPEANS TRAVELING TO LATIN AMERICA FOR HOLIDAY VISITS. MOST ARRIVE AT NASSAU ON CHEAPER INTERNATIONAL AIR BAHAMA FLIGHTS ALTHOUGH MANY ALSO ARRIVE ON VARIOUS EUROPEAN AIRLINES. THEY USUALLY ARRIVE WITH TICKETS AND CONFIRMED RESERVATIONS FOR THEIR FULL ITINERARIES UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT TRWOV VIA MIAMI IS ALL SET UP. INDEED MOST CLAIM THEY WERE SO ADVISED BY US CONSULAR POSTS. THEREFORE, IT IS SOURCE OF SHOCK AND DISGRUNTLEMENT WHEN THEY LEARN THEY MUST OBTAIN TRANSIT VISAS BEFORE THEY CAN PROCEED, A DELAY THAT OFTEN RESULTS IN MISSING TIGHTLY SCHEDULED CONNECTIONS. LATIN AMERICANS RETURNING HOME ARE PARTICULARLY INCREDULOUS BECAUSE THEY GENERALLY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PASS THROUGH MIAMI IN TRWOV STATUS WHEN TRAVELING TO EUROPE ON THE FIRST LEG OF THEIR JOURNEY. INTERNATIONAL AIR BAHAMA OFFICIALS MAINTAIN THEY NOTIFY THEIR PASSENGERS OF THE US VISA REQUIREMENT BUT IN PRACTICE THE AIRLINE DOES NOT INSIST UPON THEIR PASSENGERS HAVING US VISAS BEFORE REACHING NASSAU SINCE BAHAMIAN IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES DO NOT FIND THEM INADMISSABLE IF THEY LACK US VISAS.

3. BAHAMIAN IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES WILL ADMIT SUCH TOURISTS INTO THE BAHAMAS WITHOUT US VISAS IF THEY HAVE ONWARD TICKETS TO ANOTHER COUNTRY AND SAY THEY INTEND TO OBTAIN US TRANSIT VISAS OR TO REROUTE THEIR ITINERARIES WHILE IN THE BAHAMAS SHOULD THEY FAIL TO QUALIFY FOR US VISAS. ALTHOUGH PASSENGERS DESTINED FOR LATIN AMERICA CAN AVOID TRANSITING MIAMI BY FLYING VIA MEXICO, JAMAICA, OR HAITI, SUCH ROUTINGS ARE MUCH LESS FREQUENT AND MORE EXPENSIVE SO THESE TRAVELERS INVARIABLY APPLY FOR TRANSIT VISAS AT THIS POST.

4. WHILE THE EMBASSY ATTEMPTS TO PROCESS APPLICATIONS FOR TRANSIT VISAS AS COURTEOUSLY AND RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE, DETERMINING THE BONA FIDES OF SUCH APPLICANTS IS NOT EASY FOR THE SAME REASONS INDICATED IN LUXEMBOURG 244. OCCASIONALLY THIS POST REFUSES DOUBTFUL APPLICANTS AND FORCES THEM TO REROUTE. AS THE BEST ANSWER TO THIS PROBLEM IS CLEARLY THAT SUCH TRAVELERS SHOULD OBTAIN THEIR TRANSIT VISAS BEFORE THEY LEAVE HOME, THIS EMBASSY WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ANYTHING

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THE DEPARTMENT AND CONSULAR POSTS IN EUR AND ARA CAN DO TO PUBLICIZE THE NEED AND ACCOMPLISH ISSUANCE OF VISAS IN THE TRAVELERS' HOME COUNTRIES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NASSAU00845
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750182-0695
From: NASSAU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750527/aaaaayhq.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION VO
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LUXEMBOURG 244
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <10 Jun 2003 by MorefiRH, INA>; RELEASED <26 FEB 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NIV - TRANSIT VISA TRWOV PROBLEMS AT NASSAU
TAGS: CVIS, BF
To: LUXEMBOURG STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006